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# A Comparison of Secondary Dropout Rates in Rural and Urban Costa Rica

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

A COMPARISON OF SECONDARY DROPOUT RATES IN RURAL AND URBAN  
COSTA RICA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

MARY FLYNN DORAN

CHICAGO, IL

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
ABSTRACT	vi
THESIS: A COMPARISON OF SECONDARY DROPOUT RATES IN RURAL AND URBAN COSTA RICA	1
APPENDIX A: RESPONDENTS' REASONINGS BEHIND DROPPING OUT	43
APPENDIX B: FUTURE ASPIRATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS	47
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ENROLLED STUDENTS	51
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DROPOUT STUDENTS	54
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ENROLLED STUDENTS (SPANISH)	57
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DROPOUT STUDENTS (SPANISH)	60
REFERENCE LIST	63
VITA	65

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Number Of Cases Of School Abandonment	28
Table 2. Rural Group-Hours Studying Vs Activities Outside School	31
Table 3. Urban Group-Hours Studying Vs Activities Outside School	31

## ABSTRACT

This study examined the issue of secondary school abandonment in Costa Rica. It took the national percentage of dropouts as well as the evident problem of regional disparities in terms of high school completion into consideration while it analyzed the opinions of high school aged students in both a rural and urban area. There were four participant groups in total, two in each location. The groups consisted of 5 enrolled and 5 previously enrolled subjects in both areas and each participant was asked open ended questions about their education, future, opinion on high school in general, and attitudes in regards to dropping out in order to obtain trends and differences on school abandonment in the two distinct areas. The findings offer insight into the topic at the national level as well as the discrepancies that are evident when comparing the locations. The conclusions confirm what has been posited in past research in general and in Costa Rica while highlighting the perspective of the students and allowed for recommendations for areas of improvements to be put forth with the hope of aiding in increasing the high school completion rate overall at the national level.

## THESIS

### A COMPARISON OF SECONDARY DROPOUT RATES IN RURAL AND URBAN COSTA RICA

#### **Introduction**

Costa Rica is known for being a lead example in Central America in many aspects. It has a GDP of \$41.01 Billion. It has generally avoided the violence and corruption which has plagued the Central American region for years. In many ways, Costa Rica demonstrates growth in development (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2008) and has had very few setbacks in this respect. In terms of education, it has done extremely well in reaching the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education with an enrollment rate of 100 percent at the elementary level. With a solid foundation for development, and on track for meeting global benchmarks, it is surprising when viewing Costa Rica's current situation with regards to secondary education. It has a lower enrollment rate (73%) than countries such as Venezuela (85.9%), Panama (79.7%), and El Salvador (74%). Besides its surprising low enrollment rate in comparison to other countries in the region, school abandonment at the secondary level is also a prevalent issue. Investigation is warranted into why and how school abandonment varies depending on the region. School dropout rates range from 0.1 percent to over 58 percent at the secondary level (Garneir-Rimolo, Wachong-Castro &



Mora- Rodriguez, 2010) as compared to less than 2 percent at the primary level. This study has looked at the factors that contribute to secondary school abandonment and has compared dropout rates in both rural and urban areas. Through interviews with 4 distinct participant groups of enrolled and dropout high school students in the two locations, opinions on high school in general as well as in terms of school abandonment were highlighted. The trends and differences which became evident confirmed previous research on high school dropouts in general as well as in Costa Rica and allowed for the perceptions of students to be heard and understood. By doing this, it has also determined what factors are evident in these distinct locations areas and can therefore provide potential solutions to the issue of school abandonment within specific regions and at the national level.

### **Statement of Problem**

Recently, focus has been put on universal primary education. It is one of the Millennium Development Goals and many countries have put forth initiatives into meeting this objective. In countries such as Costa Rica, where they are on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals (UNICEF, 2008) and Universal Primary Education has been met at the elementary level, more emphasis needs to be put on secondary school completion. In countries of development, a high graduation rate is needed for continued advancement. Education, especially at the secondary level, has become a pillar to societal transformation worldwide (UNICEF, 2000). Secondary level schooling is essential for a high level of education in the labor force and allows for innovation, creation, and progress. According to Levin (2003), “higher levels of education are associated with

almost every positive life outcome-not only with improved employment and earnings but also with health, longevity, successful parenting, civic participation, and so on” (p. 5). A higher educated society also signifies less issues such as crime, violence, and teenage pregnancies.

Costa Rica has attained Universal Primary Education at the elementary level. However, at the secondary level, enrollment rates are not as high as they should be. When comparing Costa Rica’s secondary school enrollment rates to other countries in the region, it is not among the top three. A larger issue is the rate of dropouts. For the purpose of this of study, the terms dropout and school abandonment will be used interchangeably. The current average of dropouts is around 22 percent nationwide with the percentage significantly ranging from 0.1 to over 58 percent depending on the region (Garnier-Rimolo, Wachong-Castro, & Mora-Rodriguez, 2010). Costa Rica has not met its education vision through an inclusive, integrated national policy. Due to this, regional disparities, lack of coverage, high repetition rates, and challenges during transitional periods are still very apparent (UNICEF, 2008). This study compared dropout rates in both a rural and urban area in order to determine the issues which are correlated with dropping out in Costa Rica. Recommended action at the national, local, and communal levels in order for the overall high school completion rate to increase was also determined. Specifically in Costa Rica, there are very few studies and protocols on how to address secondary dropout rates as a systematic issue, especially from a rural versus urban perspective (Aguirre-Ledezma, Lizarazo, & Badilla, 2006) which enhances the importance of this study. By looking at this issue through a rural versus urban

comparison, it narrowed the broad topic of school dropout at the secondary level and examined it from a clear and unique context. This helped to provide concrete data and analysis while contributing to research on this topic in general. It provided a new perspective such as location to drop out literature while aiding to resolve this issue specifically in Costa Rica.

### **Review of Research Literature**

According to Rumberger (2011), dropping out can be viewed in three distinct ways. One is *status*. This signifies a student who has not been enrolled for a certain period of time and who has not graduated. However, this status is not something permanent and can change if the student chooses to re-enroll or eventually graduates. A second way of viewing dropping out is as an *event*. This can be as formal as the student and parents filling out the necessary paperwork and as informal as the student simply not attending school any longer. The third way of understanding dropping out is as a *process*. Generally, students do not abruptly stop attending school. There are indicators such as low attendance records and poor to failing academic tendencies. These indicators, in some cases, can be evident as early as elementary school. It is important to view dropping out in various ways because it allows for not only statistical evidence to be determined but for attitudes and behaviors with regards to dropping out to be concluded. Viewing dropping out as a status determines how many people are dropping out. For example, it helps in understanding if it is more prevalent in certain groups or in certain areas. Viewing it as an event determines how many people dropout over a certain period of time. When looking at it as a process, behaviors and attitudes which develop over time

and eventually lead to a dropout are discovered. These factors all need to be considered and understood since dropping out is a broad topic and no case is the same.

Much research has been on secondary education enrollment and dropout rates (Rumberger, 2011, Balfanz, 2007, Balfanz & West, 2008, Levin, 2003, Mehrota, 1998). It is a worldwide issue that many countries face regardless of their stage in development. When reviewing these studies, many commonalities are found. One trend is community participation and involvement. The role of the community is essential, especially in areas where dropout rates are high. Community involvement is necessary to help address high dropout rates. The schools which produce these dropout rates are a reflection of the communities they are a part of and therefore the communities need to help address the dropout crisis and understand the contributing factors. Community contribution can help bring to light the issue through understanding the correlating indicators and factors and the affect dropping out has on the community as a whole. A single dropout is a travesty but when a high number of students in a community are not completing high school, the social and economic consequences are widespread and affect the functioning and foundations of the community (Balfanz, 2007). This notion has importance for this study since there is a large disparity in the dropout rate depending on the location in Costa Rica. In more urban areas, the dropout rate is low while in more rural areas, it is alarmingly higher (Garnier-Rimolo, Wachong-Castro, & Mora-Rodriguez, 2010). This concept was considered throughout this investigation as it is looking at this issue from a rural versus urban perspective.

A second similarity found in literature is the notion of context (Rumberger, 2011, Balfanz, 2007). The circumstances for dropping out are different at the institutional, local, regional, national, and international levels. The background of one area with high dropout rates is going to be different than another even when similarities such as size and location are evident. This needs to be understood when considering policy and procedures. In areas where improvements have been seen, examination of the methods for improvement is warranted. However, an investigation into the context of that area and the factors which allowed for improvements to occur needs to also happen. This aspect proved very important when conducting this study. Variances in location, school size and environment, and resources were accounted for and analyzed as a way to shed light on school abandonment in general.

A third commonality is the necessity for multiple programs and or policies for noticeable progress to be visible. No single policy can improve dropout rates in an area. Various programs and policies reach more students and their rationales for dropping out. Since the factors which lead to dropping out vary, the responses also need to be varied (Balfanz & West, 2008, p. 12). When comparing two cases of dropouts, certain similarities might be found, however, differences will be evident as well. The reasons may seem equal but the road to dropping out might be different. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2000), many factors, which are very complicated, contribute to dropping out and therefore the solutions which are designed to combat this issue need to be capable of overseeing all of these complexities. Along the same lines, Levin (2000) posits that school participation in school abandonment alone will not fix the

problem. A visible level of success is needed and this requires multiple types of programs and support systems to address the various needs of students. From the onset, it seemed that very few, even universal, programs or policies have been implemented thus far in Costa Rica in response to this issue. This notion has been taken into consideration and proved important when recommending areas for further research.

The role of the school appears in literature as well. Schools can either be a positive force in a student's life or they can discourage them, not meet their needs and ultimately cause them to drop out. According to UNICEF (2000) high schools need to increase their ability to reach their student needs and future aspirations. Family, educators and even guidance counselors all play an pivotal role in providing students with support in discovering their abilities and natural talent. It is essential that students are guided when they are in the process of forming their future plans (Herrera & Lens, 2012). High school is a critical time for adolescents. It determines their future, and if their goals and plans are effectively acknowledged, they see a connection to their future and in finishing high school. Various mechanisms which provide both personal and academic support have been utilized more widely as it becomes apparent that students who were previously believed to be unsuccessful in their education can be, when provided with the proper support (Levin, 2003). These mechanisms should be expanded, adapted, and continuously used on a wider scale when attempting to address the issue of school abandonment at the secondary level.

School repetition is a trend in school abandonment literature as well. Especially in developing countries, high repetition is a commonality (Mehrota, 1998). Repetition

generally leads to dropping out by those who repeat continuously. Students do not advance, are discouraged, and eventually lose sight of the importance of completing their secondary education. As a developing country, Costa Rica is not immune to this phenomenon.

Transition is also mentioned various times in literature (Levin 2003, Garnier-Rimolo, Wachong-Castro & Mora-Rodriguez, 2010 & UNICEF, 2008). Transitions from the beginning of a student's education are important. The transition from elementary school to junior high or from junior high to high school is important as it signifies change. New people, new classes, new teachers, and new levels of schooling can be overwhelming during a transition. It is especially overwhelming for students who have continuously struggled throughout school. Transitioning from one level of schooling to another is a sensitive time and can push students away from continuing with their education. Many dropouts occur during a transition or as the result of a rough transition from middle school to high school. Transitioning from sixth to seventh grade (the stage when Costa Rican pupils move on to high school) is when most dropouts occur (Herrera & Lens, 2012) and this fact had implications for this study. The period where the highest number of enrolled students drop out is during the mid-year break of their first year of high school (UNICEF, 2000) followed closely by ninth and tenth grades. This notion, which is evident in the analysis portion of this study, was a central conclusion when analyzing the data.

Reasons behind dropping out also appear throughout literature on secondary school drop out rates. One of the common reasons cited for dropping out is circumstances

outside of school. Leaving school for familiar or financial reasons is one example. A student must help out at home or find work in order to contribute financially to their family (UNICEF, 2000). Pregnancy or becoming involved in criminal activity are other common examples. The situations students find themselves in do not allow them to continue in their education. The pressure of life apart from school proves too challenging for them to balance and therefore a decision to leave school is made.

What Balfanz (2007) refers to as “fade outs” is another situation which appears often when discussing the topic of dropping out. “Fade outs” are students who go through the motion of schooling year after year and are at their grade level, at least, if not higher but at a certain point in their education, become frustrated or bored and lose interest in school. They stop seeing the benefits of their education and upon reaching the legal age of dropping out, choose to do so.

Another common reasoning behind dropping out is the notion of schools pushing students out. Students are perceived by teachers, administrators or parents as dangerous and detrimental to the functioning and success of the school (Balfanz, 2007). As a result of this perception, the students are pressured to withdraw from the school, asked to transfer to another school, or are un-enrolled due to low attendance, low grades, or being above the legal age of enrollment.

Students who continuously struggle in school and are not being provided with the proper environment or support to succeed, never reach a level of success they need in order to continue in school. Therefore, they decide to dropout. This inability to be successful in school can start at a young age and can be due to a lack of poor academic



preparation or unmet social and emotional needs. Many students do not give up after an initial failure. It is after years of persistent failure, when they fall so far behind that it seems impossible for them to graduate, or when they feel so worn down from constant failure that they choose to drop out. Throughout the years, students who fail to succeed generally, in some form or another, demonstrate cries for help (Balfanz, 2007). Although they often go unnoticed, the cries for help are strong indicators for dropping out, another commonality found in dropout literature. Issues such as low attendance, low to failing grades, and behavior problems are signs of potential dropouts.

The need for more early education and development policy is also referred to in a fair amount of literature. The need for this is to equal the playing field. Students in one school come from various backgrounds and therefore have distinct experiences even before entering school. Some parents are in a place where they can offer their children educational opportunities before they enter kindergarten. When these students do enter school, they have an advantage and their notion of schooling and education, which is developed at this critical time, is a positive one. They know a lot of information and are reinforced in an effective way from the initiation of their education. These students continue to succeed while understanding the significance of schooling. Although there might be setbacks, they generally go through school with little discouragement and successfully graduate. Other students do not have the same advantage, and due to family background and circumstances, begin school with very little preparation. They enter school at a disadvantage and may be socially, emotionally, and developmentally unprepared for school from the beginning. Social and behavior problems that are not

addressed may continue to cause them problems once in school. They get frustrated, struggle, and are discouraged while in school and eventually stop understanding the significance of finishing. The recognition of the importance of early education has risen to the top of educational policy debate. Since it is less developed in many areas around the world, only now are frameworks at the political and institutional levels being created (Levin, 2003). All students and families could benefit from more early education development policy and centers. The outcome could aid in ensuring that every student who enters school has as positive experience as possible and is encouraged from the beginning.

### **Review of Literature on Secondary School Dropout Specifically in Costa Rica**

In Costa Rica specifically, education has also been given much prominence. The first president of Costa Rica was an educator and believed a strong education system would ensure democracy. Costa Rica was one of the first countries worldwide to introduce free and obligatory education. Despite its strong history with education, the current situation is different. Although school is compulsory until age 14, many students do not finish their education completely. The average school career is less than in other countries such as Panama, Colombia, and Cuba. Costa Rica is also no exception in terms of the factors behind dropping out. The commonalities previously discussed behind drop outs are evident in the case of Costa Rica. The first one is socioeconomic problems. Students have to drop out and work to assist their families or their families are not financially able to spend the necessary money to pay for school costs. The second is academic problems. Students are behind or have learning difficulties which are not

properly addressed. They then become frustrated and so far behind that they can not catch up and therefore decide to drop out. The third reasoning given for dropping out is lack of motivation. Students, over the years, loose interest in their schooling and their level of motivation to continue to study diminishes. In homes where students are dropping out due to lack of motivation, there is very little encouragement given to the student to continue. The consequences of dropping out are not clearly explained, understood, or discussed in these situations.

According to a study by Cordero-Cordero (2008), on the opinion of secondary drop outs in Costa Rica by Costa Rica teachers, student motivation, or lack there of, is a stronger contributor to dropping out than economic situations. Causes for this could be related to family presence and an apathetic position on their child's education. They are not involved and not do not support their child when they are struggling in school. Another factor for student motivation being one of the biggest causes of dropping out is the school, its administration, and teachers. Many students, according to Madeira-Mora (2007), state issues with their professors cause them frustration and discouragement, therefore disengaging them in their education. Students do not find the courses valuable or useful for their future. They see little correlation with how it will serve them, whether it be further along in their education or in their careers. Teachers are unable to instill motivation in their students and do not aid them in nurturing their natural talents and capabilities. When describing teachers' responses to the main causes for dropping out, the majority of the teachers and administrators claim that the largest issue is lack of interest and family support and they do not view it as an institutional problem. They recognize

their role as teachers and the need to remain in contact with the school administration about problematic students and potential dropouts, however; they state that they are not aware of a protocol to follow (Cordero-Cordero, 2008). They view aspects such as activities and professional development on dropping out, their abilities as teachers, the school in general, and students learning problems as having very little to do with dropping out (Cordero-Cordero, 2008). This dichotomy of students feeling frustrated by teachers while teachers viewing the family and motivational level of the student as the main issue demonstrates the need for more study on this topic. It also affirms a lack of studies or policies to help address the issue of dropping out at the institutional level.

As previously mentioned, Costa Rica dropout rates at the secondary level has to be given more attention. Developing more policy in terms of school abandonment could provide teachers with a greater ability to be able to recognize indicators and highlight their role in addressing and preventing it, especially in areas where dropping out is more prevalent. As can be seen, there is a great need for examination into this issue in Costa Rica in order for solutions to become evident.

### **Research Question**

The aim of this study was to gain an insight into the dropout rate at the secondary level in Costa Rica and, from the perspective of students, determine what factors contribute to this issue. The primary research question was: “From a rural versus urban perspective, what commonalties and differences are found in terms of how Costa Rican students view the issue of dropping out at the secondary level?” The study provided an understanding of distinctive and common factors that appear to have an influence on

secondary school dropout rates in Costa Rica specifically while measuring the cross-cultural applicability of drop out literature in general.

### **Research Methodology**

The research took the form of an instrumental qualitative case study as it examined the broad topic of secondary education abandonment in a specific context. It determined the characteristics of high school abandonment by comparing a rural and urban area. Gaining insight into the issue entailed document analysis and interviews. It examined secondary school level attainment, or lack thereof, through a cultural lens and the conclusions were based on information found through examination of documents provided by the Ministry of Public Education (MEP), literature on secondary education abandonment in general and specific to Costa Rica, as well as through interviews with students previously or currently affiliated with a local Costa Rican high school. The study was submitted as a proposal and approved by the Loyola University Chicago IRB in accordance with protocol when conducting a study that entails human subjects.

### **Participants**

Data was collected in an urban area and rural area of Costa Rica. The settings were chosen in order to examine regional disparities and determine commonalities and differences at the national level. The urban setting was Orosi de Cartago, and is a suburb outside of one of the largest cities in Costa Rica, Cartago, which has a population of approximately 155,000 people. The rural area was La Esperanza de Tarrazu, a town of 150 people which is 45 minutes from any major city. There were a total of 4 participant groups, 2 in both areas. Initially 5 subjects who are enrolled in high school and 5 subjects

who had been previously enrolled but are not currently were interviewed in each location. Each subject was asked a series of open ended questions in regards to their education and future. All participants were between the ages of 14 and 20, which are the ages of Costa Rican high school pupils. Each interview was transcribed and the findings are presented in the analysis section. The interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes each. In the urban setting, the interviews took place at a tourist center. In the rural setting, they were conducted at the local elementary school. After each interview, the responses were transcribed and translated from Spanish to English. The names of each participant remain protected through a system of coding <sup>1</sup> but their opinions and direct statements are presented in the analysis portion of the study through trends, statistical evidence, direct quotes, or samples from interview transcriptions.

The data is complete with 95 percent of the interviews having taken place. In the rural group, each participant successfully partook in the interviews while 9 out of the 10 participants in the urban group completed their interviews. Both groups offered firsthand and up to date information for analysis. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, the participants' first language. There were variables such as differences in age, family background, and the ability or inability to understand a question which influenced each individual's response and could not be controlled.

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<sup>1</sup> Data collected from rural subjects will be represented by either RD (rural drop out) or RE (rural enrolled) followed by a number which was determined by the timeline of their interview. Data collected from urban subjects will be represented by either UD (urban drop out) or UE (urban enrolled) followed by a number which was determined by the timeline of their interview. F represents the name of the interviewer and S represents Subject when direct transcript samples are presented.

## **Data Analysis Presentation**

All of the data presented in the following sections are taken from the interviews and are represented in trends, statistical evidence, direct quotes, or samples from the transcriptions of the interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. The recordings of the interviews were directly documented and then correctly formatted into the sequence that make up the entire conversation and encapsulate the language of each subject and interview. The conclusions presented in the next section were determined by the respondents' answers to the interview questions in order for their views and perception on high school and school abandonment to be acquired and should not be construed as generalizations. The responses allow insights into trends and differences at the regional and national levels and are solely based on the interviews of the four participant groups in the two distinct areas.

## **Research Analysis**

### **Rural Trends and Disparities**

When analyzing the collected data from both areas, similarities and differences are found. In this section, data from both locations will be individually analyzed followed by an explanation of the trends and disparities between the two areas. In the rural location, there were various similarities found. All of the participants, regardless of whether they were enrolled or had dropped out, stated they spent a significant more amount of time per week watching television or partaking in other activities than studying. According to one of the enrolled participants, "I only spend more time studying if I have an exam or something like that" [Di muy poca solo cuando se van hacer

exámenes casi solo] and others confirmed that trend by indicating they spend or spent an average of 1 hour a week studying and 10 hours doing other activities. The following responses from the interviews of both enrolled and drop out subjects demonstrate this conclusion <sup>2</sup>.

**RD 1:**

*F. Cuando estaba en la escuela, cuantas horas cada semana estudiaba?*

*S. Eh muy poco*

*F. A que cuantas horas pasaba viendo tele y saliendo con amigos haciendo otras cosas?*

*S. Viendo tele eran bastantes salir con amigos casi nunca lo hice*

*F. When you were in school how many hours did you study each week?*

*S. Eh very little*

*F. How many hours did you spend watching and going out with friends, doing other things?*

*S. Watching TV it was a lot, going out with friends I almost never did that*

**RD 2:**

*F. Esta... Cuando estaba la escuela, cuantas hora por semana estudiaba?*

*S. Ni una hora [laughing]*

*F. Nada? Y cuantas horas hacia otras cosas como jugar con amigos ver tele--?*

*S. Di no se [laughing]*

*F. Todo el tiempo?*

*S. Si*

*F. Ok when you were in school how many hours per week did you study?*

*S. Not even a hour*

*F. Nothing and how many hours did you do other things like play with friends, watch TV...?*

*S. Um I don't know [laughing]*

*F. All the time?*

*S. Yes*

**RE 1:**

*F. Cuantas horas afuera de clases estudia usted cada semana?*

*S. Diay como di casi nada como una hora por semana o allí [laughing]*

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<sup>2</sup> RD represents Rural Drop Out Subjects. RE represents Rural Enrolled Subjects. The number and order were determined by the timing of their interviews.



*F. Cuantas horas cada semana hace otras actividades como ver tele trabajar...?*

*S. Diay todo [laughing] el día trabajar y hacer algo alli*

*F. How many hours outside of classes do you study every week?*

*S. Um like um almost like a hour per week or about that [laughing]*

*F. How many hours each week do you do other activities like watch TV, work...?*

*S. Um all [laughing] day I work and do something like that*

**RE 2:**

*F. Cuantas horas a la semana estudia?*

*S.[laughing] Oohh 3*

*F. Cuantas horas a la semana hace otras actividades como ver tele salir con amigos...?*

*S. Ohh unas 10*

*F. How many hours a week do you study?*

*S. Ohh 3 [laughing]*

*F. How many hours a week do you do other activities like watch TV, go out with friends...?*

*S. Ohh like 10*

The amount of time devoted to studying per week, regardless of whether they are enrolled, demonstrates that they study or studied little outside of school. This signifies an issue of not prioritizing their education. They spend more time in front of the television, with friends, or working rather than studying, therefore putting their education second. As a result, the value of receiving a high school degree could be or has been, in the case of the drop out subjects, diminished.

Another trend was similarities in response to the question of “what factors do you believe cause school abandonment at the secondary level?” [Cuales factores cree que contribuye mas a la desercion en el colegio?]. Subjects reported laziness of the person was one of the most prominent factors. Three of the participants indicated laziness while the other subjects chose not to respond to the question or stated they did not know. With

the conclusion of laziness being one of the principal factors for dropping out, a huge gateway for improving the problem of school abandonment in Costa Rica can occur. Programs to motivate students, provide involvement in extra curricular activities, and a variety of other solutions can be expanded upon. The detail of the subjects responses are provided in Appendix A.

The trends have implications for this study as do the disparities concluded from the data analysis. One major discrepancy is the level of parental support. When asked “what would your parents say if you told them that you were going leave school” [Como se reaccionaria su familia si les dira que considera dejar estudiar?] or “what did your family say when you told them you were going to drop out? How did they react?” [Que dijo su familia cuando decidio dejar su educacion? Como se reaccionaron?], four enrolled subjects replied that their parents would be discouraged and upset. One enrolled subject stated “they would be disappointed because they do a lot for one” [Se decepcionarian porque hacen mucho por uno]. Six subjects implied that their parents would not or did not say anything with one enrolled participant directly saying “maybe they wouldn’t say anything to me but the other part of the family would not like that I would leave my studies” [Di tal vez no me digan nada pero la otra parte de la familia no les gustaria que dejara de estudiar]. Six subjects indicated their parents as their main support for continuing their education. The remaining four participants claimed their only support came from their grandparents or other family members. Parental support appears a significant amount in school dropout literature, and not having it can be detrimental to a

student and can impact their decision to continue with their education which is why this finding is important.

Half of the participants indicated that they were aware of very few cases of school abandonment while the other half claimed they knew many dropouts. One subject stated that almost all of their cousins had dropped out or had not started high school. This disparity indicates an array of response from a group who all know each other and implies strong and varying opinions on continuing and completing high school within a small population. High school is a formative time and students are easily affected by the actions of those around them. If people of influence such as cousins, siblings, and friends decide to continue with their education or abandon it, a student's own opinion and decision in terms of their education can be swayed. Table 1 in the following section represents this data while comparing it to the data found from the urban group.

### **Urban Trends and Disparities**

Trends and differences were discovered when analyzing the data collected from the participants in the urban area as well. The first similarity is the indication of laziness as a main reason for dropping out. Half of the urban participants provided this rationale in response to the question. As previously mentioned, this conclusion has implications for this study and needs to be expanded upon. Solutions need to be developed to address lack of motivation as a cause for school abandonment. The detail of these responses are provided Appendix A.

All of the participants indicated they or students they knew dropped out in 8th grade (which is the second year of high school in Costa Rica) or between 7th-9th grades.

Eighth grade was indicated by 4 out of the 9 participants (44.4 percent), 3 subjects (33.3 percent) claimed 7th grade, and the remaining 22.2 % (2 participants) stated 9th grade. This demonstrates a large commonality and is a key conclusion of this study. With the knowledge that the second year of high school is perceived to be the time when the majority of students abandon their education, solutions to encourage students to continue after their first year or the creation of prevention programs can now be brought to the attention of policy makers and administrators.

Disparities were also found when drawing conclusions from the collected data in the urban location. Subjects indicated different future goals or career aspirations. They varied from secretary to medic, to chef , to economist. This is a positive difference and an important conclusion. Motivating students and encouraging them to set and reach goals can aide them in successfully completing high school and or be a major factor in the decision to re-enroll eventually, which 4 out of the 5 drop out participants plan to do in the future. The detail of these responses are provided in Appendix B.

Disinterest in school is another notion that arose when analyzing data. There were distinct reasons given among the participants when asked what disinterested them the most in their studies, either currently, or when they were enrolled. The following samples from the data demonstrate a few participants' responses <sup>3</sup>.

**UD 1:**

*Ahuh ok y antes de dejar que le motivaba mas?*

*S. Tener un titulo tener un buen trabajo*

*F. Y que le desinteresaba mas?*

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<sup>3</sup> UD represents Urban Drop Out Subjects. UE represents Urban Enrolled Subjects. The number and order were determined by the timing of their interview.

*S. Estudiar tanto*

*F. Ahuh ok and before leaving what motivated you most?*

*S. To have a title to have a good job*

*F. And what disinteresteded you most?*

*S. Studying so much*

**UD 2:**

*F. Antes de dejar de estudiar que le motivaba mas?*

*S. Ser un profesional creo*

*F. Que le desinteresaba mas ?*

*S. Los clases eran muy aburridos*

*F. Before leaving your studies what motivated you most?*

*S. To be a professional I believe*

*F. What disinteresteded you most?*

*S. The classes were really boring*

**UE 1:**

*F. Ahuh que le motiva mas en terminar el colegio?*

*S. Eh diay llegar a la universidad y ser alguien importante*

*F. Y que le desinteresa mas?*

*S. Diay este me desinteresa mas como di saber que tengo que sacrificar muchas horas de fiesta a estudiar*

*F. Ahuh what motivates you most to finish high school?*

*S. Eh well to get to university and be someone important*

*F. And what disinterests you most?*

*S. Well ok it disinterests me most like to know I have to sacrifice many hours of parties to study*

**UE 2:**

*F. Ahuh ahuh que le motiva mas en terminar sus estudios?*

*S. Ve verme como medico ayudando las personas*

*F. Como el imagen de eso y que le desinteresa mas?...*

*S. ...Que ahuh um que no se*

*F. Nada?*

*S. Di supongo que si pero no puedo pensar en este momento*

*F. Los clases, los profesores?*

*S. Si algunos cursos o saber en el futuro no voy a tener el puesto que quiera porque la carera esta muy sobre saturada.*

*F. Ok*

*F. huh ahuh what motivates you most to finish your studies?*

*S. Se see myself as a medic helping people*

*F. Like the image of that and what disinterest you most?*

*S. That ahuh um that I don't know*

*F. Nothing?*

*S. Um I suppose yes but I can't think in this moment*

*F. The classes, the professors?*

*S. Yes some classes or knowing in the future I am not going to have the position I would want because the career is very over saturated*

*F. Ok*

As can be seen, differing responses were indicated by the participants. They ranged from mathematics, to sacrificing free time, to distracting students, to a learning disability. These varied responses indicate that in a small participatory group, many factors contribute to disinterest and unhappiness in school. If disinterest is strong enough and not addressed, a student who is on track, could make the decision to abandon their education. This is a complicated issue and dependent on personal factors and as a result, there is not a universal resolution. Cause for expansion and development on this particular aspect and addressing its complexities is therefore warranted.

### **Rural versus Urban Trends and Disparities**

The previous section examined similarities and differences in the collected data from each specific area. A comparison of the rural and urban data will follow. Many trends were discovered upon data analysis. One of the most prevalent was the similarity in response to rationale for dropping out. The main reasons that were provided were laziness and a person's economic situation. Laziness [pereza] is being interpreted as lack of motivation. Subjects, when stating economic reasons behind dropping out, were

general and none indicated a specific example of an economic situation. Out of the 20 asked, 7 (35 percent) indicated these factors. These responses, which are similar to those provided in other literature on high school dropouts, are significant for this study. They are commonalities and it can be hypothesized most dropouts in Costa Rica will claim these as their reasoning for dropping out irregardless of their location. A summary of their responses are presented in Appendix A.

Since this study examined the issue of dropping out from a rural versus urban perspective it can be concluded on a national level in Costa Rica, laziness and a person's economic situation are the central factors in causing students to drop out. When future attempts are made to improve high school attainment, this knowledge can be considered.

Parent or familial support is another commonality. Every subject responded their parents or another close family member are or were their main support when posed with the question of “who do you find the most encouragement from in terms of continuing with your education” [Quien(es) le apoya(an) mas en cuanto continuar su educacion?] or “while you were still in school, who did you get the most encouragement from to continue on and not leave [Cuando estaba estudiando, quien le apoyaba mas a continuar y no dejar?].” The following are samples of participants' responses <sup>4</sup>:

**UE 1:**

*F. Quienes le apoyan mas en cuanto continuar en su educación?*

*S. Eh diay me apoyan bien mis papas bueno mi papa verdad y mi hermano verdad y --que sigue adelante y también metas del futuro y tener un salario?*

---

<sup>4</sup> UD represents Urban Drop Out Subjects. UE represents Urban Enrolled Subjects. RD represents Rural Drop Out Subjects. RE represents Rural Enrolled Subjects. The number and order were determined by the timing of their interview.

*F. Who supports you most in terms of continuing your education?*

*S. Eh well ok my parents well my dad right and my brother right and --that I keep moving forward and also goals for the future and to have a salary*

**UE 2:**

*F. Quienes le apoya mas en cuanto su educación?*

*S. Ma*

*F. Who supports you most in terms of your education?*

*S. Mom*

**UD 1:**

*F. Ahuh cuando estaban estudiando quien le apoyaba mas a continuar a estudiar?*

*S. Mi papa*

*F. Ahuh when you were studying who supported you the most to continue studying?*

*S. My dad*

**UD 2:**

*F. Cuando estaba estudiando quien le apoyaba mas a continuar?*

*S. Mis padres*

*F. When you were studying who supported you most?*

*S. My parents'*

**RE 1:**

*F. Ok. Quienes mas le apoyan mas en cuanto continuar con su educación?*

*S. Diay mi mama y mis hermanos y mis familiares*

*F. Ok who supports you the most in terms of continuing your education?*

*S. Um my mom and my siblings and family members*

**RE 2:**

*F. Ahuh en que --que personas le apoyan mas en cuanto continuar su educación?*

*S. Mis padres*

*F. Ahuh in what-- what people support you the most in terms of continuing your education?*

*S. My parents*



**RD 1:**

*F. Quienes le apoyan mas en cuanto continuar con su educación?*

*S. Mis abuelos [laughing]*

*F. Who supports you most in terms of continuing with your education?*

*S. My grandparents [laughing]*

**RD 2:**

*S. ... um no se*

*F. Y su familia le apoyan en cuanto estudiar?.. Que si les apoyan?*

*S. ...Si*

*S. ...Um I don't know*

*F. And your family supports you in terms of studying?-- That if they support...*

*S. ...Yes*

This is an encouraging and important conclusion given that parental support is a major component in a child's decision to finish high school. Regardless of whether a student is enrolled or not and of their rural or urban location, they receive support from their parents or close family members to finish high school. This is a positive indication which will eventually lead to a decreased dropout rate in Costa Rica. Students are influenced by their parents and close family members and if they receive unconditional support and encouragement to continue studying, more students are apt to finish. This conclusion demonstrates that Costa Rican parents and families recognize the importance of their children's education and are playing a clear role in seeing it accomplished. This conclusion also demonstrates the role of the school in terms of support and continuing one's education, or lack thereof. The school and or teachers were never mentioned in response to this question and this notion warrants further examination.

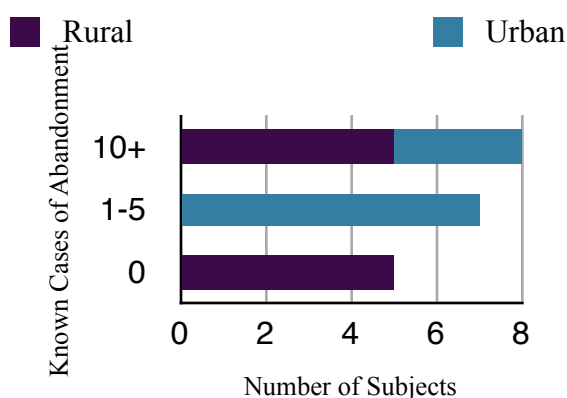
Subjects responded that grades 7-9 were the years that most students generally dropout. This is significant for this study because it demonstrates that regardless of location, these three years are the period when most students make the decision to abandon school. Students could be from an urban area or a rural area irregardless, they will decide to leave high school between 7-9 grades according to the participants. Six out of the 19 participants indicated 7th grade as the level when students abandon their education. Four subjects stated 6th grade was the year that most students chose to not continue their education. Another 4 participants stated 8th grade while 2 subjects indicated 9th grade. The remaining 3 participants were vague and stated between 7-9th grades. With this knowledge, the transitions into these grades can be put on the radar of policy makers, administrators, and teachers and more efforts into seeking out indicators of dropping out could be presented. With awareness of rough transitional years, more dropouts in general could be prevented.

Just as there are trends found when analyzing the data, there are clear and important differences. One of the most significant differences is the number of dropout cases each participant group are aware of. When the rural population was asked how many people they knew who had dropped out, there was variance. Half of the group (5 out of 10) responded they were aware of very few cases while the other half stated they knew many people who had dropped out. In the case of the urban population, the responses were clearer and within a range of numbers. They not only were aware of few cases, but they were able to provide specific numbers in terms of friends and acquaintances they knew who had dropped out. Within the urban participant group, the

highest number of known cases was 10 and the lowest was 1. This is not a large range.

Table 1 demonstrate this data.

Table 1. Number of Known Cases of School Abandonment



This difference allows a first hand insight into the attitudes and perceptions toward high school and high school abandonment <sup>5</sup>. In the urban area, participants were able to be specific in regards to exact number of known cases of abandonment. The opposite is the case for the rural population. The participants were broader in their responses to the same question. Specific numbers were not provided by any member of the rural population. Half of the population claimed they knew many people who had dropped out which indicates that more high school students in that area are not enrolled compared to the urban area. This finding is noteworthy as it is a representation of the value of, and attitude toward, secondary education in each location. There are significantly less people in rural area than in the urban setting and more of the Costa Rican population in general lives in

<sup>5</sup> The X axis represents the number of known dropout cases as provided by each participant. The Y axis represents the participant groups, 10 being the maximum number as it is divided between the rural and urban groups. Although some answers were vague such as “a few” or “many”, a few is represented in the 1-5 range and “many” responses are represented in the 10+ range

rural areas which is cause for alarm. The rural subjects were matter of fact in their responses as well as vague. Participants were not taken aback from being aware of many drop outs which indicates an unaffected attitude in terms of secondary education and toward students who decide not to finish.

All dropout students in both areas were posed the question of “how did your parents react when you told them you were going to drop out?” [Que dijo su familia cuando decidio dejar su educacion? Como se reacionaron?]. One of the rural participants stated “they didn’t say anything” [No me dijeron nada] while two participants affirmed this apathy by responding “the truth is they did not say anything to me” [La verdad, no me dijeron nada]. When examining the results from the urban participants, their responses indicate the opposite. One subject said that their parents “ got really upset and did not want me to leave” [Se enojaron y no querian que me saliera] and three of the remaining four participants had similar responses stating that their parents got mad and frustrated, wanted them to move forward and continue studying, and reiterated that they did not want the subjects to abandon their education. This is evidence that in the urban setting, parents support and desire their children’s continued education and appear to be more emotionally involved based on the subject’s responses. If parents do not demonstrate they are emotionally invested in their children’s education and future, children will have very little to guide them.

Direction for the future is another discrepancy and reiterates the conclusion of a varying level of parental support. When the rural drop out subjects were asked what their plans for the future were, one subject indicated they did not know yet, one simply stated

“no”, two indicated they were going to work, and only one participant specified that they wanted to work as a coffee cultivator. In comparison to the urban dropout group responses, variance in clarity and direction is evident. One urban participant stated that they were probably going to study while the remaining subjects indicated specific jobs such as a secretary, a professional goalie, and a mechanic. Parental guidance, encouragement, and emotional investment assist high school students to discover a specific purpose and future goal. Students whose future aspirations are not nourished will not have a clear idea of what they want to be and the direction they want their lives to take.

The amount of time devoted to studying outside of the classroom also varies between the two groups. Every rural participant stated they spend or spent approximately one hour a week outside of school studying and the enrolled subjects only study when they have an exam. Each rural subject, regardless if they were in school or not, spent ten hours a week watching television, socializing with friends, or partaking in other activities. The urban population was more balanced in terms of their studying and free time. In general, they spend/spent five hours a week outside of school studying and ten hours a week watching television and, or socializing. This disparity represents a difference of priority and level of effort. When comparing Table 2 to Table 3, the difference between the amount of time the populations spends studying can be found and compared.

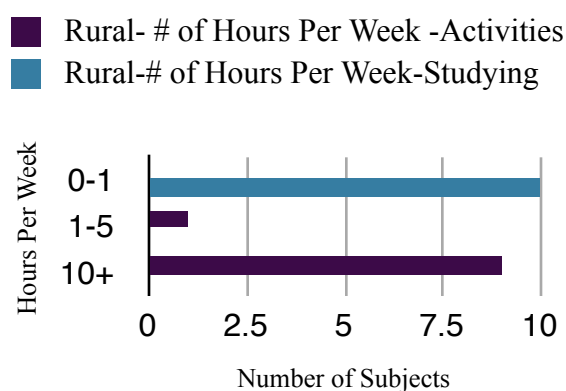
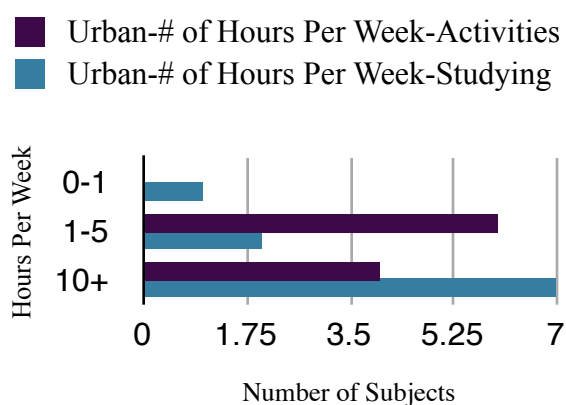
Table 2. <sup>6</sup>Rural Group-Hours Studying Vs Activities Outside School

Table 3. Urban Group-Hours Studying Vs Activities Outside School



Even though participants socialize and, or watch television the same amount of time per week, stronger emphasis on studying, especially outside of school, is apparent in the urban setting. It is difficult to postulate students in the rural setting do not value their education as much as those in the urban setting. An indicator such as this however,

<sup>6</sup> The X axis represents the number of participants while the Y axis represents the number of hours per week. The hours were determined by both specific hours provided by participants and or calculations based on either the amount of hours that a participant studied or partook in other activities. This is based on a 12 hour day.

demonstrates students in the urban area spend more time outside of the classroom on schoolwork and therefore put forth more of an effort.

Future aspirations also varied among the two populations. Regardless if they were enrolled or had dropped out, students in the rural setting in general do not have clear ideas of what they want to become in the future. When asked what their desired occupation was, almost 50 percent of the rural participant group stated in some form, if not directly, “I don’t know” [No se]. When posed with the same question, each urban subject, with the exception of one, stated a specific occupation or goal. This lack of clarity for the future could have an impact on how much effort they put forth in school and if they eventually finish. One of the participants in the urban group, when asked what motivated them most to finish up their education, stated “the image of seeing myself as a doctor” [Ve verme como medico ayudando las personas]. When one has a strong desire to make something of themselves in the future, it is easier to be motivated to work hard and complete necessary benchmarks such as a high school education. Appendix B highlights some of the participants responses in order to demonstrate the previous conclusions.

### **Correlations Between Review of Literature and Current Study**

Commonalities in relation with school abandonment were presented in the review of literature portion of this study to introduce the topic and detail common posits of past research. This section will connect similarities found in past research which have implications for this study. The first is the concept of community. Both populations are a part of a community and although there are no definitive connections from the data in terms of a specific role of the communities in students’ decision to continue to study, the

collected data determined there is more value put on completing high school in the urban community than in the rural community. This conclusion is based on two things; the known number of dropout cases, which as presented in the analysis section, is lower and specific according to the urban participants. Support in terms of continuing high school is the other. As the data demonstrates, all of the parents of the urban participants encouraged their children to study and finish high school or were disappointed and bothered when their children decided to leave high school. In some cases, parents of the rural participants did not have a strong reaction to their children leaving or continuing high school.

The second relation between the data and existing dropout literature is context. The study compared two distinct areas. The context of each area and each participant affected trends and comparisons as well as individual responses. The disparities found both within each specific population as well as when comparing the two locations are subject to their context and therefore this notion had a presence in this study.

School support and the role of the school in encouraging or not encouraging students to continue high school was highlighted in previous literature. In this study, the lack of school support and processes for struggling students has been concluded as an issue that requires more examination. Participants indicated there are “orientadores” or counselors however, few were specifically able to describe what they do and how or if they help. School or teachers were not mentioned as main support for continuing education by any of the participants. This conclusion suggests improvements in this area are needed.



In the review of literature, another concept that was presented was rationale for leaving school. Previous literature concluded many students drop out due to economic reasons which this study confirmed. Lack of motivation or laziness was the other principal rationale provided and affirms what existing literature based in Costa Rica indicated. With these results, it can be determined that in Costa Rica, students drop out of high school generally for the same reasons as other students in distinct areas.

Transitions and how they can effect a student's position on continuing with high school or not appeared in previous studies as well as in the current research. One of the most definitive conclusions of the data analysis was that 7-9th grades were the main years in school that Costa Rican pupils make the decision to leave school. In both locations, participants indicated these years as the most common times to abandon high school. For the purpose of this study, transitions, especially in the first two years of high school, are challenging and have a large impact on the secondary school abandonment rates being what they are currently.

### **Connection of Data Analysis to Study**

In the analysis section, trends and disparities found in the data analysis were examined. They indicate aspects of dropping out which are the same regardless of location. They also highlight differences. The data provides key information and opinions on school abandonment in Costa Rica in general and can be used to develop solutions to this issue.

Two major similarities were found in both locations and demonstrate commonalities as well as trend previously found in literature on school abandonment in

Costa Rica. Generally, students drop out due to lack of motivation or an economic situation and receive the most support in regards to their education from their parents or close family members. As a result of these conclusions, these aspects can be validated and contribute to existing drop out literature. With the knowledge there are two clear rationales for dropping out regardless of location, they can be addressed in a general sense when attempts to improve dropout rates are made in the future. When confronting dropping out in the future, parent or family support can also be considered as it is an important factor.

The disparities provide important findings as well. One major conclusion is the difference in attitude with regards to dropping out between the two areas. Another is the varying amount of time devoted to study outside of the classroom. The third is the differing levels of parental support. The fourth is clarity in future goals. These conclusions differ depending on location and are therefore significant.

The differences offer insights into dropout literature previously unknown and are specifically connected to location. Gains made in one area and factors causing dropping out to still be prevalent in another area become evident. Regional disparities is a significant issue in Costa Rica (Garnier-Rimolo, Wachong-Castro, & Mora-Rodriguez, 2010), and these discoveries bring light to the issue and factors which influence the discrepancies.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The data has demonstrated in general, dropping out is less prominent in the urban area. With this knowledge, the schools and students in this area can be examples for rural

students. This is important for the nation of Costa Rica given that as of 2010, 35.6 percent of the population (1,651,007) live in urban areas while 64.4 percent of the population (2,988,820) live in rural areas (World Urbanization Prospect, Population Division, UN, 2009). There can be more investment in rural secondary schools and in prevention programs which can greatly aid in combating the issue of dropping out. As a developing country, investment in education and particularly secondary education is a necessity. This study detailed the similarities when comparing rural and urban perspectives as well as the disparities. The variances are prominent and it can be concurred that the examination of secondary school dropouts from a rural and urban area offers a distinct and important perspective in dropout literature in general.

Many studies have been done on school abandonment at the secondary level and each study offers unique frameworks and perspectives. Balfanz, 2007, for example, focuses his work on the rationales behind dropping out in general while Herrera and Lens, 2012 look specifically at the role of the school. School repetitions and its effect on dropping out was the perspective that Mehrota, 1998, focused that particular study on while Levin, 2003, examines transitions. These brief examples were expanded on in the literature review portion of this study and demonstrate the varied studies previously completed on dropping out. Their frameworks have contributed greatly to dropout literature in general. In Costa Rica specifically, research with regards to school abandonment is lacking (Aguirre-Ledezma, Lizarazo, & Badilla, 2006) and this notion aided in determining the placement for this study. It expanded on and contributed to the issue in an area where studies were lacking, adding to its significance. From the broad

perspective of Costa Rica as the focus, this study was narrowed by examining the location of the participants as a way to gain an insight into the trends and disparities of the overall topic. In terms of a location framework, the study provided a rural versus urban comparison. This perspective was important for various reasons. The conclusions can contribute to existing literature on secondary school dropouts and enrich it by offering a different framework. Regional disparities in general and specifically at the secondary level is an evident issue in Costa Rica. This study hoped to highlight the factors which are continuing to contribute to this issue as well as determine gains that have been made in certain areas. By using location as the framework, this was achieved.

The conclusions presented in this study demonstrate where each area is in terms of enrollment at the secondary level and whether school abandonment is prevalent in their communities. By determining the status of each area, the factors that contribute to enrollment being higher or dropping out being an issue became evident. The conclusions exhibit similarities and differences of perceptions and opinions of the students in each area and provide specific distinctions with regards to school abandonment which are solely based on location.

This study examined a rural and urban setting in one country and therefore its conclusions can be considered when examining the same issue in a different area. Its gains are significant since it utilized location as the framework and specifically focused on a rural versus urban comparison which is new to dropout literature. In most other areas of the world, there are both rural and urban areas and therefore this study and its

conclusions can provide insight to the issue of secondary school dropout rates when combating the issue in other areas.

### **Limitations to Study**

The perspective of this study only represents that of the students, whose opinions and understanding of the topic are significant. However, the study could be enriched if the perspective of teachers and parents was included. Numerical data collected from the participants, such as the number of hours per week spent studying outside the classroom and the number of known dropout cases were estimates from the participants and not concrete. Despite these limitations, important trends and conclusions were visible and the data demonstrated significant information for the study.

### **Future Research**

Based on this research, there are aspects that can be amplified and expanded upon for future research which will be now be recommended. Programs in rural areas to encourage students to continue their education could be developed and made widely available. There should be an examination and evaluation of existing programs which encourage students to stay in school in both areas. From there, developments to improve those programs and make them contextually appropriate can occur.

Student motivation and why it is low could be researched. Since this was provided as one of the main reasons for dropping out, the root cause of lack of motivation needs to be discovered. Discussions with students and an understanding of their perspectives could provide insight. Teacher motivation could also be inspected. Teachers could be focused on as a source for both encouragement in staying in school as well as a cause for leaving.

The notion of resilience could prove interesting for continued research on this study. The dropout participants who indicated an interest in reenrolling could be examined as a new study group. The study could focus on the reasons that impacted the students decisions to reenroll and the factors which changed as they completed their high school education. It would be interesting to analyze their journey in reenrolling and the nature of adversities and conditions which the students had to battle and how they eventually overcame them.

A final aspect could be parent training in terms of continuing education. Parents need to be informed about the advantages of having their children complete high school over other options such as working. Seminars in how to address a child who is considering dropping out could also be developed and offered to parents in order to be able to provide the necessary support for their children.

### **Final Conclusion**

The issue of high school abandonment is not a new one and is evident in many areas of the world. In every society a strong educated population is important and secondary school education helps to guarantee this. In areas of development, such as Costa Rica, for progress to continue, a high level of secondary school education attainment is essential. Currently the country is not at the level it should be in terms of this educational benchmark although it is a regional example. In order to understand this issue in Costa Rica, a country where there is not much existing research on secondary school dropouts rates, this study looked at the issue from a rural versus urban perspective. It did this not only to have a narrow framework to work but to contribute to existing

literature on dropout rates at the secondary level by providing location as the core source of reference.

Conclusions from the data, which confirm findings in previous literature, demonstrate certain variances in regards to school abandonment that can be attributed to the location. With the knowledge that in certain instances location can or does affect the chances of a student dropping out, the distinctions can be examined in depth and remedies can be offered in effort to lower the overall dropout. The aspects that remain unaffected by location can be attributed to other factors besides location in future research.

The hope of this study was to build upon existing dropout literature in general and in Costa Rica and by using the comparison of rural versus urban areas, offer conclusions on why this perspective is important. First hand accounts of high school aged students both enrolled and dropped out were acquired in order to gain their perspective. Their responses were analyzed and conclusions which demonstrate differences and similarities from the rural versus urban perspective were determined. The trends and disparities and their relation to the issue in Costa Rica were explained as well as the general discoveries from using location as a framework.

APPENDIX A

RESPONDENTS' REASONINGS BEHIND DROPPING OUT



## No Matriculados Rural

Participantes	RD 1	RD 2	RD 3	RD 4
Pregunta	Que factores le causo la decision de dejar de estudiar?	Que factores contribuyeron a su decision de dejar de estudiar?	Que tendria que cambiar para motivarse a terminar?	Que tendria que cambiar para motivarse a terminar?
Respuesta	Um no se	Ninguno	Proponer a estudiar mas	Um pensar que puedo lograr las cosas que me propongo

7

## Rural Dropout

Participants	RD 1	RD 2	RD 3	RD 4
Questions	What factors caused you to make the decision to leave school?	What factors caused you to make the decision to leave school?	What factors caused you to make the decision to leave school?	What would have to change to motivate you to finish?
Responses	Um I don't know	None	Propose to study more	Um think that I can achieve the things that I propose to myself

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<sup>7</sup> RD represents Rural Dropout responses. RE represents Rural Enrolled responses. UD represents Urban Dropout responses. UE represents Urban Enrolled responses. The questions and responses are directly taken from the transcripts of the interview.

## Matriculados Rural

Participantes	RE 1	RE 2	RE 3	RE 4
Preguntas	Que factores cree que contribuyen mas al abandano escolar	Que factores siente que contribuyen mas al abandano escolar	Que factores cree que contribuyen mas al abandano escolar	Que factores siente que contribuyen mas al abandano escolar
Respuestas	Digamos que pereza tal vez tengo de estudiar pero para ir al colegio no	Um muchas veces pereza o razones economicas o por la familia	Um es que no se	Tal vez la situacion economica o la pereza de estudiar

## Rural Enrolled

Participants	RE 1	RE 2	RE 3	RE 4
Questions	What factors do you believe contribute most to school abandonment?	What factors do you feel contribute to school abandonment?	What factors do you believe contribute most to school abandonment?	What factors do you feel contribute to school abandonment?
Responses	Yes lets say laziness maybe I have to study but to go to high school no	Um many times laziness or for economic reasons or for the family	Um its that I don't know	Maybe the economic situation or the laziness of studying

## No Matriculados Urbano

Participantes	UD 1	UD 2	UD 3	UD 4
Preguntas	Que factores contribuyeron mas a su decision de dejar de estudiar?	Que factores contribuyeron mas a su decision de dejar de estudiar?	Que factores contribuyeron mas a su decision de dejar de estudiar?	Que tendria que cambiar para motivarse a terminar?
Respuestas	El horario que sailo muy tarde	Mi problema de aprendizaje	Los clases eran bastante aburridos	Estudiar mas

## Urban Dropout

Participants	UD 1	UD 2	UD 3	UD 4
Questions	What factors contributed most to your decision to not continue studying?	What factors contributed most to your decision to stop studying?	What factors contributed most to your decision to stop studying?	What would have to change to motivate you?
Responses	The schedule it let out really late	My learning problem	The classes were really boring	Um study more

## Matriculados Urbano

Participantes	UE 1	UE 2	UE 3	UE 4
Preguntas	Que factores cree que causan que la gente dejan de estudiar	Que factores cree que causan que la gente dejan de estudiar	Que factores cree que contribuyen mas al abandono escolar	Que factores cree que causan que la gente dejan de estudiar
Respuestas	Um tal vez la situacion economica o que le gusta estudiar mas o que no quiere	Que le ponen demasiado y uno no sabe ni que hacer	La pereza o el ir mal	Tal vez la pereza um o en algunos casos la falta de dinero o el disinteres de estudiar tambien

## Urban Enrolled

Participants	UE 1	UE 2	UE 3	UE 4
Questions	What factors do you believe cause people to stop studying?	What factors do you believe cause people to stop studying?	What factors do you believe contribute most to school abandonment?	What factors do you believe cause people to stop studying?
Responses	Um maybe the economic situation or that they don't like studying any more or they don't want to	Um that they give you too much and one doesn't even know what to do	Laziness or doing badly	Maybe its laziness um or in some cases the lack of money and the disinterest in studying too

APPENDIX B

FUTURE ASPIRATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

## No Matriculados Rural

Participantes	RD 1	RD 2	RD 3	RD 4	RD 5
Preguntas	Planes para el futuro	Planes para el futuro	Metas o planes para el futuro	Carrera Deseada	Metas o planes para el futuro
Respuesta	No se trabajar	No	Um ser agricultor de cafe	Um no se todavia	Um no se todavia tal vez seguir y terminar mis estudios

<sup>8</sup>Rural Dropout

Participants	RD 1	RD 2	RD 3	RD 4	RD 5
Questions	Plans for the future?	Plans for the future?	Goals or plans for the future?	Career aspirations?	Goals or plans for the future?
Responses	I don't know work	No	Um be a coffee cultivator	Um I don't know yet	Um I don't know maybe finish or continue my studies

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<sup>8</sup> RD represents Rural Dropout responses. RE represents Rural Enrolled responses. UD represents Urban Dropout responses. UE represents Urban Enrolled. Responses and the questions are responses provided directly from the transcripts of the interview.

## Matriculados Rural

Participantes	RE 1	RE 2	RE 3	RE 4	RE 5
Preguntas	Carrera Deseada	Carrera Deseada	Carrera Deseada	Que aspectos de su educacion le va a servir mas para su futuro	Carrera Deseada
Respuestas	Um trabajar en el campo no se	Obstetra	Musica con emphasis en la ensenanza y ejecucion del canto	Quiero ser medico pero estoy en eso	Educacion Especial

## Rural Enrolled

Participants	RE 1	RE 2	RE 3	RE 4	RE 5
Questions	Career aspirations	Career aspirations	Career aspirations	What aspects of your education is going to be most useful in your future	Career aspirations
Responses	Um work in the field I don't know	Obstetricion	Music with an emphasis in teaching and execution of singing	I want to be a medic but I don't know I am in that	Special Education

## No Matriculados Urbano

Participantes	UD 1	UD 2	UD 3	UD 4	UE 5
Preguntas	Metas o planes para el futuro	Metas o planes para el futuro	Metas o planes para el futuro	Metas o planes para el futuro	Metas o planes para el futuro
Respuestas	Trabajar	Ser un gran mecanico	Ser un gran potero de futbol	Salir adelante con mis estudios	Estudiar

## Urban Dropout

Participants	UD 1	UD 2	UD 3	UD 4	UE 5
Questions	Goals or plans for the future	Goals or plans for the future	Goals or plans for the future	Goals or plans for the future	Goals or plans for the future
Responses	To work	To be a great mechanic	To be a huge soccer goalie	To move forward with my studies	Study

## Matriculados Urbano

Participantes	UE 1	UE 2	UE 3	UE 4
Preguntas	Carrera Deseada	Carrera Deseada	Carrera Deseada	Carrera Deseada
Respuestas	Economia	Medicina	Um no se	Gastronomia

## Urban Enrolled

Participants	UE 1	UE 2	UE 3	UE 4
Questions	Career Aspirations	Career Aspirations	Career Aspirations	Career Aspirations
Responses	Gastronomist	Um I don't know	Medicine	Economy

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ENROLLED STUDENTS



1. Age:
2. Location:
3. Grade Level:
4. School Name:
5. Career Aspiration:
6. How many dropout cases are you aware of?
7. How many hours a week outside of school do you spend studying?
8. How many hours a week do you spend doing other activities (watching T.V, playing with friends, etc)?
9. Have you ever thought leaving school?
10. What aspects of your high school education will be most useful to you in your future?
11. What factors do you feel contribute to deciding to leave school at the secondary level?
12. What age and level do you find most of your fellow classmates decide to drop out?
13. What does your family say when they hear about students dropping out?
14. How would your family react if you were to tell them that you were considering dropping out of high school?
15. Who do you find the most encouragement from in terms of continuing with your education?
16. If you were ever to decide to leave school, what do you feel the most significant consequences of that decision would be?

17. How does your school encourage you and your fellow classmate to finish high school? Are there activities and processes in place to help students who are struggling academically or in terms of their behavior? If so, are they effective?

18. Why do you think finishing high school is important? How does obtaining this level of education help you, your community, and even Costa Rica as a nation?

19. What motivates you the most in finishing high school?

20. What disinterests you the most in school?

APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DROPOUT STUDENTS

1. Age:
2. Location
3. Grade level attained:
4. Name of the last school attended:
5. Future Goals/Plans:
6. Discluding yourself, have many other dropout cases are you aware of?
7. When you were still attending school, how many hours per week did you study?
8. How many hours did you spend doing other activities (playing with friends, watching T.V, etc)?
9. Do you feel that finishing high school will eventually be important for your future?
10. Do you plan on ever re-enrolling?
11. What would have to change about your high school experience for you to gain motivation to finish?
12. Does your family encourage you to continue your education?
13. What factors contributed the most in your decision to leave school?
14. What was the process like which eventually led to your decision to drop out?
15. What grade level were you completing or had you completed when you ended your schooling?
16. What did your family say when you told them you were going to drop out? How did they react?
17. While you were still in school, who did you get the most encouragement from to continue on and not leave?

18. What are some of the significant consequences for not finishing high school?
19. How did your school encourage its pupils to stay in school? Were there activities or processes in place to help students who were struggling academically or in terms of their behavior?
20. Do you think finishing high school is important? For you or other young people? For your community? For Costa Rica as a nation?
21. What motivated you the most in your schooling before leaving?
22. What disinterested you the most?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ENROLLED STUDENTS (SPANISH)

1. Nombre:
2. Edad:
3. Ubicacion:
4. Nivel:
5. Nombre de Escuela:
6. Carrera Deseada:
7. Cuantos casos de desercion conoce ?
8. Cuantas horas afuera de clases estudia cada semana?
9. Cuantas horas cada semana hace otras actividades como ver television, salir con amigos, etc.?
9. Ha pensado en dejar estudiar?
10. Cual aspecto de su educacion secundaria sera mas util para su futuro?
11. Cuales factores cree que contribuye mas a la desercion en el colegio?
12. A cual edad y nivel de escuela piensa que la mayoria de sus companeros dejen sus estudios?
13. Que dice su familia en cuanto la desercion y cuando se dan cuenta que otra persona se va a dejar a estudiar?
14. Como se reaccionaria su familia si les dira que considera dejar estudiar?
15. Quien(es) le apoya(an) mas en cuanto continuar su educacion?
16. Si decide dejar su educacion, para usted, cual seria la consecuencia mas significativa de esta decision?

17. Como le apoyan los maestros y administradores de su escuela? Hay actividades y procesos desarrollados para ayudar a los alumnos que tienen problemas academicamente o en cuanto su comportamiento? Si hay, funcionan bien?
18. Por que cree que es importante terminar sus estudios? A obtener esa nivel de educacion, que beneficios hay para usted, su comunidad y aun Costa Rica como pais?
19. Que le motiva mas en terminar el colegio?
20. Que le disinteresa mas en el colegio?



APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DROPOUT STUDENTS (SPANISH)

1. Nombre:
2. Edad:
3. Ubicacion:
4. Nivel de educacion logrado:
5. Nombre de la ultima escuela que asistio:
6. Metas/planes para el futuro:
7. Sin incluir a usted, cuantos casos de desercion conoce?
8. Cuando estaba en la escuela, cuantas horas cada semana estudiaba?
9. Cuantas hora pasaba viendo television o saliendo con amigos etc?
10. Cree que para su futuro sera importante terminar el colegio?
11. Cree que matriculara de nuevo?
12. Que tendria que cambiar para motivarse para terminar?
13. Su familia le apoyan en cuanto continuar su educacion?
14. Cuales factores contribuyeron mas a su decision dejar su educacion?
15. Como era el proceso que eventualmente le causo dejar sus estudios?
16. Cual nivel estaba compliendo o habia complido cuando dejo ir al colegio?
17. Que dijo su familia cuando decidio dejar su educacion? Como se reacionaron?
18. Cuando estaba estudiando, quien le apoyaba mas a continuar y no dejar?
19. Que son algunas consecuencias mas significativas para no terminar el colegio?
20. Como le apoyaba su escuela a continuar? Habian actividades o un proceso desarrollado para ayudar a los alumnos que tenian problemas academicamente o en cuanto al comportamiento?

21. Cree que es importante terminar y salir del colegio? Para usted y otros jovenes? Para su comunidad? Para Costa Rica como pais?

22. Antes de dejar, que le motivaba mas para seguir?

23. Que le disinteresaba mas?

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## VITA

Mary Flynn Doran is from Central Illinois and before pursuing a Masters of Art in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies from Loyola University Chicago, she attended Carthage College where she graduated in 2009 with a Bachelors of Art in Spanish and History. Immediately after graduation she moved to Costa Rica to teach English with WorldTeach. After moving back to the US in 2011, she began at Loyola University Chicago in August where her research centered around the comparative aspect of the program and education in conflict settings. While finishing up her course requirements and designing her thesis, she had the opportunity to move back down to Costa Rica and gained valuable and hands on work experience as the national field director for WorldTeach Costa Rica where she remained until recently.